News United States Department of Labor

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Occupational Safety and Health Administration

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OSHA PROPOSES INDOOR AIR QUALITY, WORKPLACE SMOKING RULES

In an effort to secure a safe and healthful work environment for America's workforce, Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich today announced the department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is moving to regulate indoor air quality and environmental tobacco smoke.

"Every day in this country more than 20 million working men and women face unnecessary health threats because of poor indoor air quality and environmental tobacco smoke," Reich said. "The proposed rule is designed to tackle these problems.

"We are confident that compliance with the rule will reduce the suffering and disease associated with poor indoor air quality and environmental tobacco smoke. OSHA has taken this action to prevent thousands of heart disease deaths, hundreds of lung cancer deaths, and the respiratory diseases and other ailments linked to these hazards," said Reich.

According to Reich, "the proposed rule is an investment in prevention. Lives will be saved, health care costs reduced and productivity increased."

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Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/zrbl0000

Assistant Secretary of Labor Joseph A. Dear, head of OSHA, added that "the rule is one of the most extensive ever proposed by OSHA. The environmental tobacco smoke provisions in the proposal apply to more than 6 million workplaces under OSHA jurisdiction, while the indoor air provisions apply to more than 4.5 million non-industrial worksites."

Non-industrial workplaces include offices, schools and training centers, commercial establishments, health care facilities, cafeterias and factory break rooms.

The proposal would require affected employers to write and implement indoor air quality compliance plans including inspection and maintenance of current building systems to ensure they are functioning as designed. The proposal would not require all building owners and employers to install new ventilation systems.

In buildings where smoking is not prohibited by employers or local requirements, the proposal would require designated smoking areas which are separate, enclosed rooms exhausted directly to the outside. Other proposed provisions would require employers to maintain healthy air quality during renovation, remodeling and similar activities.

"This proposed rule on indoor air quality and environmental tobacco smoke is part of the most ambitious standard-setting agenda in OSHA history," said Reich. "The standards OSHA plans to set over the next two years will help ensure that America's working men and women will not face unnecessary risks and health hazards in their workplace.

"The department is committed to tackling the tough issues and tackling them with tough regulations. That's what the new OSHA is all about."

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The proposed rule will be delivered to the Federal Register on March 28 with publication expected in a week to 10 days.

Written comments on the proposal should be submitted within 90 days of publication in quadruplicate or on a disk (in WP 5.0, 5.1, 6.0 or Ascii) with one hard copy and information not contained in the disk (e.g. studies, articles, etc.) submitted in quadruplicate, to the OSHA Docket, Docket No. H-122, Room N-2625, 200 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210

Requests for public hearings should be submitted within 30 days after publication in the Federal Register to Tom Hall, OSHA Division of Consumer Affairs, Room N-3649, 200 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210 (phone: 202-219-8617). Such requests should include a statement on reasons hearings are necessary and the issues a requestor would anticipate addressing.

If hearings are held, a notice will be published in the Federal Register announcing date(s), time(s) and location(s).

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Note to editors: See attached fact sheet for details of the proposed rule.

The text of this news release is available from the Department of Labor electronic bulletin board, LABOR NEWS, at 202-219-4784. Callers must pay any toll-call charges. 300, 1200, 2400, 9600 or 14,400 BAUD; Parity: None; Data Bits=8; Stop Bits=1; Voice phone 202-219-8831.

The information in this news release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-219-8151.

A statement by Secretary Reich on indoor air quality will be available on the department's audio news service after 12 p.m. E.S.T. 1-800-877-9002.

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FACT SHEET ON OSHA PROPOSED RULE

HEALTH EFFECTS OF POOR INDOOR AIR QUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL TOBACCO SMOKE

-- Poor indoor air quality has been shown to result in headaches, respiratory infections, wheezing, nausea, dizziness, respiratory allergies, Legionnaire's disease, influenza, colds, measles, pulmonary tract infections and other ailments.

-- Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke has been linked to heart disease, lung cancer, decreases in pulmonary function, low birthweight babies, miscarriages, a number of birth defects and other illnesses and diseases.

-- Of more than 70 million employees working indoors, OSHA estimates that 21 million are exposed to poor indoor air and millions of others are exposed to environmental tobacco smoke.

SCOPE OF PROPOSAL

-- Provisions for indoor air quality apply to 70 million workers and more than 4.5 million non-industrial indoor work environments, including offices, schools, commercial establishments, health care facilities, cafeterias and break rooms.

-- Environmental tobacco smoke provisions apply to industrial and non-industrial work environments, or all of the over 6 million work environments under OSHA jurisdiction.

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS (partial listing)

-- Employers must develop and implement indoor air quality compliance plans.

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-- Employers are required to assure proper functioning of building systems which affect indoor air quality.

-- Employers who do not prohibit smoking must designate non-working smoking areas that are enclosed and exhausted directly to the outside.

-- Employers who do not control their building's ventilation systems must demonstrate a good faith effort to comply.

-- Full implementation of the standard must go into effect one year from the effective date.

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